

Socio-economic Determinants of Voting Behaviour

(A case study of village Chhwind, Tehsil Malakwal of Dist. M.B.D)

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Abstract:-

The aim of the present research was to find out the possible socio-economic determinants of voting behaviour. The qualitative technique was used to gather and interpret the obtained data from the field and findings of the study are mainly based on empirical results. The researchers used individual in depth interviews, content analysis, and method in data collection phase. Respondents of the study were the household head of the research locale. The locale of the present research was village Chhwind, of Tehsil Malakwal district Mandi Baha-ud-Din. The finding of the present research was that higher level of education is associated with increased political knowledge, critical thinking skills, and civic engagement. Different types of families, such as nuclear families and joint families can have varying impact on voting behaviour. When society experiences stability and prosperity, individuals may prioritize economic factors when making voting decisions. Mass media including television, newspapers, and online platforms, plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing voters in the research locale.

Key Words:- Socio-economic voting behavior Chhwind Families Public Opinion

Introduction:-

Voting behavior refers to the decision of people to vote. Individual voter's attitudes and social factors influence the decision of voting. In democratic politics, casting a vote is most populated term. The adult citizens of democratic era thought that their vote is a way of squeeze out their acceptance and dissatisfaction of governmental decisions, programs and policies. In democratic system, casting a vote is essential procedure, and the decision of people has the ability to change the aristocrat. For the operative, voting is the basic decision making process in democracy. [MS. Deepika Gahatraj]

Many socio and economic problems emerged in the country. On electoral outcomes, socio and economic determinants of voting behaviour have a considerable effect. Education, occupation, income and social class are the factors which influence voting behaviour of the people. The knowledge of these required determinants are necessary to provide valuable insights in to politics and shaping an effective campaign about voting process. [Dr. Mughees Ahmed1]

Researchers analyze various factors that influenced the voting behaviour during the study of socio-economic determinants of voting behaviour. Educational attainment, income levels, occupation and social class are included as factors. For example, the voting behaviour of elite class people is different as compare to the low class people. It can be crucial for political campaigns and policy making that the social economic determinants provides valuable understanding the motivations and preference of voters. [Akhtar and Sheikh, 2014] Organization of society and perceptions of voters which are set-up by culture is a pattern of determination of voting behaviour. The studies about Abbottabad division of KyberPakhtunKawa determining voting choices in a region by social influences are more essential. Studies proved that influence of social cultural factors on the political preferences of the voters is more essential while the requirements and conditions are being discussed. [Becker & Conner, 1981]

The members of a minority group living in a specific place for years, with the passage of time they learnt the language of the majority of that place and then they cast their votes in elections to the candidate of the real ethnicity.[Heath et al., 2011] Social class plays a significant role. National Election of 1992 in Britain proves that the majority of elite class voters cast their votes to the conservative party and the majority of low class voters cast their votes to labour party. [Lednum, 2006]

Political party affiliation, performance evaluation, party leadership affiliation, issues orientation and candidate affiliation are some political determinants of voting behaviour. In national elections, role of each element of political dynamics attract voting behaviour according to the foregoing researches. [Ahmad, 2010]

Objectives:-

Specific objectives of the present Research are outlined below:-

- 1- To find out the socio-economic status of respondent.
- 2- To find out the possible socio-economic determinants of voting behaviour.

Material and Methods:-

A qualitative technique was principally used to gather and interpret the obtained data and findings of the study are mainly based on empirical results. The researchers used individual in depth interviews, content analysis method. The respondents of the study were household head of the research locale. In the phase of data collection 15 respondents were selected in the phase of sampling. Purposive sampling techniques were used in the phase of sampling.

A semi structured interview guide was used. The interview guide consisted of different parts: respondent profile, socio-economic status, and voting behaviour of respondents of present locale. All interviews were conducted in Urdu language and interpreted into English for the purposes of analysis. Similar techniques were used by us. [Iqbal, S., Idrees, B., & Mohyuddin, A. (2014)]

Respondents were encouraged to participate in a discussion in which they were able to talk extensively about their voting behaviour. The interview was not limited to the prepared schedule but was open-ended and encouraged additional comments from the respondent. Data collection and analysis took place from the end of September to the end of October 2023. All the respondents were selected after informed consent. Extensive notes were taken during each interview and these were subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Locale of the research:-

Locale of the present research was village Chhwind, union council No. 63, Tehsil Malakwal of District Mandi BahaudDin, Punjab, Pakistan. The major castes in Village are Tarar, Gondal & Syed. The total area of village is 60,750 sq/feet. The summers are long and severe and cold weather is short. Punjabi language is most popularly spoken language. Descent group system prevails in the village and its membership continues only through the males. [Iqbal, S., Idrees, B., & Mohyuddin, A. (2014)]

The people of village mostly have fundamentalist mindsets. The education system in village Chhwind is very low. Only one Primary school and one private school exist in research locale and the level of education is very low. Due to the less education level, the people of research locale have not enough awareness about voting process which affect's the system of voting at the great range. The fertility (Birth) rate is high because people think that more number of children means more number of votes which could help to earn a good place in voting behaviour. The people of exogamy marriages are discouraged. "Purdah" is observed in the village. People of research locale think that women are just responsible to fulfill the household needs and they should not take part in external affairs. That's why, they have to follow the voting decision of the household head (male) and they are not allowed to inter-fair in these matter. . [Iqbal, S., Idrees, B., & Mohyuddin, A. (2014)]

The economic organization of village Chhwind has undergone quite a few changes. At first the villages have an agro-based economic system, but now other non-agricultural activities have been taken up by majority due to farming resources landholdings have reduced to a low percentage. . [Iqbal, S., Idrees, B., & Mohyuddin, A. (2014)]

Data Analysis:-

Socio-economic profile of the respondent:-

The socio condition of the people of research locale is satisfactory. People cooperate with each other to fulfill their customs and needs. The economic condition is also righteous. Because they engaged with the agricultural activities. If the season covered up in a better way than no problem arise in the village but if unfortunately they faced seasonary problems then their conditions become difficult. The families which sent their children abroad for better employment and

income, they faced this stage easily as compare to the low one. People of research locale mostly live in houses that rely on six to seven rooms. People live in the form of join family system.

Education and Voting behaviour:

Education plays a crucial role in shaping of voting behaviour. Research suggests that higher level of education is associated with increased political knowledge, critical thinking skills, and civic engagement. Well-educated individuals are more likely to be informed about political issues, evaluate candidates based on policy positions and actively participate in the electoral process. Education also helps individuals understand the importance of voting and encourages them to exercise their democratic rights. So, education can have a positive impact on voting behaviour by empowering individuals to make informed choices.

“I am uneducated person. I usually cast my vote on the bases of personal relationship and community opinions.”

It is observed that the influence of uneducated individuals on voting behaviour can vary. While education is often associated with increased political knowledge and engagement, un-educated individuals may still participate in the electoral process based on other factors such as personal values, emotions, or social influences. Their voting choices may be influenced by charismatic leaders, party affiliations, or media narratives. It's important to note that voting behaviour is influenced by a complex interplay of various factors, and education is just one of them.

Family and voting behaviour:-

The role of family in voting behaviour is significant in present locale. Family plays a crucial role in shaping our values, beliefs, and political attitudes of research locale. Growing up in a particular family environment exposes us to their political ideologies, which can influence our own voting choices. Family members may engage in political discussion, share their perspectives, and even participate in political activities together, fostering a sense of political identity within the family unit. Additionally, family members may vote similarly due to shared interests, values, or party affiliations. However, it's important to note that individuals can still develop their own independent political views, even if they differ from their families. Ultimately, the influence of family on voting behaviour varies from person to person.

“In our village, collective decision making is common. So, my voting decision relies on the opinion and guidance of my family.”

It is observed from research locale different types of families, such as nuclear families and joint families can have varying impacts on voting behaviour. In a nuclear family, where there are fewer members, political discussions and influence may be more direct and focused. This can lead to a stronger alignment in voting choices among family members. On the other hand, in a joint family, with multiple generations and extended relatives living together, there may be a

wider range of political perspectives and ideologies. This diversity within the family can lead to more dynamic and nuanced discussions, potentially influencing individual voting behaviour. Ultimately, the impact of different family types on voting behaviour depends on the specific dynamics, values, and interactions within each family unit.

Economic Condition and Voting Behaviour:-

The impact of a stable economic condition on voting behaviour is significant in research locale. When society experiences stability and prosperity, individuals may prioritize economic factors when making voting decisions. A stable economy often translates to job security, higher incomes, and improved living standards, which can influence voters to support the incumbent government or a party that promises to maintain economic stability. On the other hand, during economic downturns or instability, voters more inclined to seek change and support candidates and parties that offer new economic policies or solutions. Economic conditions shape voter perceptions, priorities, and ultimately impact their voting behaviour.

“We live in a village and also rely on the agricultural activities. So, I cast my vote to that party which has favorable policies regarding to agriculture.”

When the economic condition is un-stable, it can have a significant impact on voting behaviour. During times of economic turmoil, individuals may become more dissatisfied with the incumbent government or ruling party and seek change. Unstable economic conditions often lead to job losses, income inequality, and financial hardships, which can create a sense of frustration and disillusionment among voters. In such circumstances, voters may be more inclined to support candidates or parties that promise economic reforms, job creation, or measures to address the economic challenges. The impact of an unstable economy on voting behaviour can be particularly pronounced as voters prioritize their economic well-being and seek solutions to improve their financial situation.

Mass Media and Voting Behaviour:-

The impact of mass media on voting behaviour is significant in research locale. Mass media in present research locale include television, newspapers, and online platforms, plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing voters. Through news coverage, political advertisements, and mass media can shaped the narrative around political candidates, parties, and voters in present research. It is observed that mass media inform voters about the local policies, achievements, controversies of different candidates, influencing their perceptions and preferences. Mass media also provides a platform for political debates, interviews and discussions, allowing voters to gain insights into the positions and ideologies of various candidates. It is observed from research locale that, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, You-tube, and Tiktok have become influential in political discourse, enabling individuals to share and consume political content, engage in discussions, and mobilize support

for causes and candidates. However, it's important to critically evaluate the information presented by mass media and consider multiple sources to make informed voting decisions.

“In past, I cast my vote on the base of collective decision making but mass media influence me a lot. I have heard many political discussions and also news through television and now I cast my vote according to my own opinion.”

Conclusion:-

Locale of the present research was village Chhwind, union council No. 63, Tehsil Malakwal of District Mandi BahaudDin, Punjab, Pakistan. In this research paper, we discuss about the socio-economic determinants of voting behaviour of the people of village. For the present research, voting behaviour refers to the decision of people to vote. Socio-economic determinants are Education, Family, Economic condition, and mass media finding of the present research shows that different education level have a profound impact on voting behaviours. Different type of family has greater influence on voting behaviour. Stable and unstable economic conditions have ascendancy on voting behaviour. Different type of Mass media also has a great impact on voting behaviour of the people in research locale.

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